

Measures to avert erosion approved for Beach Haven

But there are arduous conditions

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BEACH HAVEN — Borough officials received word Friday that they will be able to use bags filled with sand, known as Geo-Tubes, to fortify their most eroded beaches.

Borough officials also found out they will need to get all required public access, public parking, real estate easements and rights of way before they can begin.

Beach Haven was informed of the approval and the criteria in a letter from David Rosenblatt, an administrator with the state Department of Environmental Protection.

"I read the first paragraph and was thinking how great it was," Beach Haven Mayor Deborah C. Whitcraft said Friday. "Then I kept reading and realized we have a big problem."

Every community on Long Beach Island is struggling to obtain easements so an islandwide, \$5 million storm protection project can begin this summer.

"They are dangling a carrot in front of our oceanfront property owners," Whitcraft said. "We haven't gained any ground in getting the easements, and if this project is contingent on us getting them, I am not very optimistic."

According to the DEP letter, the state will fund 75 percent, or \$375,000, of the estimated \$500,000 project in Beach Haven, which will be done by the Army Corps of Engineers and the state Bureau of Coastal Engineering.

The borough applied for DEP permission to use the Geo-Tubes — bags that are filled with sand, like a sausage skin — to stabilize beachfronts on Merivale and Nelson avenues.

"The Geo-Tubes will be more effective than piling tons of sand only to have it wash out with the next storm," Whitcraft said. "Geo-Tubes are not invincible, either, but it will last far longer than sand bulldozed in front of pilings.

"The DEP is sending us a message that can't be said any louder," Whitcraft said. "They are saying the Geo-Tubes are contingent on the town meeting the provisions, and I don't see us meeting them in the near future."

On Friday, Mayor DiAnne C. Gove of Long Beach Township also wrestled with beach erosion issues.

At a township Board of Commissioners meeting, Gove said her public works department would like to place boulders in Holgate to stabilize parts of the beach front there.

"But we need DEP permission," she said.

She and Commissioner Ralph Bayard also said that the municipality might not be able to pay to transport sand to the township to rebuild dunes in front of oceanfront homes much longer.

"We're at the end of the tunnel now," Bayard said. "We are considering just using bulldozers to scrape sand from the beach and not truck it in."

Gove said the money used after the last two storms to replenish washed-out dunes was squirreled away from old ordinances. An estimated \$50,000 has been used to make repairs.

Gove and Bayard said several options, such as not replacing sand washed out from under homes

and forcing the property owners to assume those costs, are being discussed for future storms.

"We can't use a Band-Aid approach anymore," Gove said. "We need surgery."

Gove also said township commissioners are discussing ways to get property owners to sign required easements.

"I'm waiting for the DEP to get back to me," she said. "Just wait a little bit longer."

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